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# MISSION

JANUARY 1979



## Guyana

—AND CULTISM IN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (p. 3)



# THE MARGINS

One of the most subtle tragedies of the Guyana cult killings (see pp. 3 and 8) is that it will inevitably lead to an over-reaction against the very idea of *the sect*.

I am schizophrenic about them. A part of me despises sectarianism, which is a part of the separatist tendency of the cult. It is frequently arrogant, judgmental of others while blind to its own shortcomings, and generally opposed to our Lord's prayer "that they all may be one." The impression left by some Churches of Christ, that they alone comprise the True Church, is only one of the worst examples of sectarianism.

On the other hand, I admire some sectarians for their courage to stand against the easy drift of the culture away from God. All religious reformations owe a part of their accomplishments to the fact that many sectarians among them have the moral muscle which the larger world simply lacks. It requires no spiritual stamina to tolerate glibly everything that comes down the tube. The call to "come out from among them and be separate" is answered only by the brave—the bravely sectarian, that is.

I suspect that the feeling that there is some truth in both positions is why many of us stay associated with the Churches of Christ. They have not insisted on quick and over-neat answers to the dilemma, but in fact have nourished the freedom, in their best moments, to allow the twin truths of separateness and unity to exist in tension with each other.

Next time I share my pastoral counselling cases (that's the other half of my work besides *Mission*) with a supervising psychologist, I plan to get him to counsel me. I will ask, "Why do I have this apparent urge to defend indefensible causes?"

Then I suppose I'll thank him to leave me alone. After all, if you have to keep hold of two seemingly opposite, but true, notions, you need all the schizophrenia you can get. —*Red*

TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

—EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

# MISSION

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 7

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# Guyana — and Cultism in the Restoration Movement

By DAVID R. REAGAN

My family and I had gone to visit grandparents for Thanksgiving, but I found myself having difficulty cultivating very much thanksgiving spirit as the newspapers, radio, and television bombarded me with news updates on the massacre in Guyana. My senses were numbed by the rising body counts, the graphic pictures, and the horror stories of the survivors who told about mothers forcing their children to drink poison.

I had never heard of the "Reverend" Jim Jones or his People's Temple, and I wondered what sort of monster could orchestrate a mass suicide-murder of more than 900 men, women, and children who had followed him in faith to his tropical paradise. Was he some sort of Oriental guru? A disciple of Satan? Or perhaps a Marxist masquerading as a minister?

You can imagine the sense of shock I felt when I discovered that Jones was a *Christian* minister and that his whole operation was ostensibly a *Christian* church. My shock became even more profound a few days later when I saw a letterhead of the People's Temple displayed on television and noticed that the wording at the top read: "The People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ."

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*Dr. David Reagan is preaching minister at the Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas. His degree in international law, is from Harvard-Tufts University.*

*The Disciples of Christ!* Could it possibly be that this mass murderer, this epitome of a "false prophet," could be a product of my own Restoration heritage? "No!" I told myself, "it's just a coincidence in phrasing." But then, the next morning, there it was in black and white in the *Dallas Morning News*. In a UPI article datelined Edmond, Oklahoma, John W. Harms, a former executive minister of the Christian Church in Indiana, was quoted as denying that he had ever ordained Jim Jones to be a minister for the Disciples of Christ. Nonetheless, the article went on to point out that Jones claimed to have been ordained by Harms in 1964 and that Jones considered his congregation to be a Disciples' church.

"How could this be?" I asked myself over and over again. How could my religious heritage produce a false prophet of such antichrist proportions? And how could this land, with its Christian-oriented beginnings, spawn such a cult?

## CULTS IN AMERICA

Actually, it occurred to me, false prophets have plagued the church throughout its history; why should our land be an exception? In fact, perhaps our very freedom of religion has helped produce the many cultic groups which masquerade on the American scene today as "Christian" churches. They range from such long established groups as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses,



and Christian Scientists to the more recent and exotic groups like the Moonies, the Way, and the Children of God.

There are "Christian" cults centered around philosophy, meditation, spiritism, mysticism, prophecy, political reform, and yes, even UFOs! They are normally characterized by a dynamic leader who claims some sort of new revelation. They view themselves as the one and only true church, and they thus reflect an attitude of paranoia toward "outsiders." Members are nearly always subjected to a program of intense indoctrination and are expected to give the cult their total commitment. There is usually an authoritarian, if not totalitarian, power structure, with absolute submission being given to the cult leader, who is viewed as God's representative on earth. Most important, the cults are always characterized by a defective Christology which distorts Jesus by compromising his deity and his unique role as Savior. It was this threat, in the form of Gnosticism and its denial of the incarnation, that the apostle John wrote against:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. (1 John 4:1-3a)

In short, John's response to cultic infiltration was to institute a creedal test.

### CULTS AND RESTORATIONISM

Our own movement was penetrated by the cults in its early years. One of Alexander Campbell's associates, Sydney Rigdon, became a Mormon leader. During the 1840s Campbell wrote many essays in *The Millennial Harbinger*, warning the Restoration churches against the lure of the "Millerites," a prophecy cult which claimed to know the exact date of the Lord's return.

The most serious cultic attack on the Restoration Movement occurred at its very beginning in 1805, when the Christian Church congregations founded by Barton W. Stone in Kentucky were hit hard by Shaker missionaries from New York.

The "Shakers" (the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing) were a classic cult. Founded by Ann Lee Stanley, better known as "Mother Ann," the Shakers preached the imminent return of Christ and argued that to prepare for it, marriage should cease, existing marriages should be dissolved, and all sexual activity should be stopped.

In his autobiography, Stone wrote: "Never did I exert myself more than at this time, to save the people from the vortex of ruin. I yielded to no discouragement, but labored night and day, far and near, among the churches where the Shakers went." Even so, many of Stone's converts were lost to the Shakers, including three of the ministers in his movement. Two of these ministers, John Dunlavey and Richard M'Nemar, had been among the six men who signed the famous "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery" one year earlier. Two other ministerial colleagues of Stone who had also signed the "Last Will and Testament," Robert Marshall and John Tompson, were so upset by the whole Shaker experience that they decided to return to the Presbyterian Church. They concluded that the lack of a creed was what had made it easy for the Shakers to proselytize their Christian Churches. Thus, the Shaker cult decimated the leadership of Stone's movement, leaving only two of those who had signed the "Last Will and Testament"—Stone and David Purviance.

### THE CONTEMPORARY MESSAGE

What does all this mean for today? I think it means that cultic activity is going to increase and intensify. I think we are going to see many more Jim Joneses in the years ahead. Both the social and religious environments are conducive to the rise and spread of cults.

Sociologically, Western culture is in a state of flux. The traditional Hebrew-Christian values are on the defensive. Humanism and its off-shoots of hedonism and existentialism are gaining the upper hand. Increasingly, Western "Christian" societies are coming to resemble Paul's description of what society at large will be like in the "last days":

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money,



proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

People today are bewildered, frustrated and insecure. They are desperately searching for meaning. And in the midst of it all stands a Christian church-at-large that is shot through with unbelief. As Paul so eloquently prophesied, mainstream Christianity today is "holding the form of religion but denying the power of it" (2 Tim. 3:5). Instead of confidently proclaiming the good news of God's grace in Christ, Christian ministers are spreading the bad news of their cancerous self-doubts. But what more could be expected? After all, most are graduates of seminaries that have rejected the inspiration of the Scriptures, the reality of the supernatural, the presence of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit. While frightened, insecure people are crying out for answers, the churches are replying with questions. It is no wonder that people are flocking to every Pied Piper who comes along posing as a prophet of God.

## OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CULTS

But what about *us*? What about the heirs of the Restoration Movement? Are we doing anything to propel people into the cults? After all, aren't we a Bible believing people who speak with authority and conviction? Why should questioning people who come to us look elsewhere?

Let's take a look at ourselves. Our movement has produced three main church groups: the Churches of Christ, the Independent Christian Churches, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Churches of Christ are the most conservative; the Disciples of Christ, the most liberal—in both theology and polity. The Independent Christian Churches fall between these two on the spectrum, but toward the conservative end. I contend that all three of these groups have characteristics which would encourage their members to go cult-hunting.

Let's take the Churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches first, since their

religious perspectives are so nearly the same. One thing about their theology that would make their members susceptible to cultic appeals is their indecisiveness about the most important question a person can ask: "Am I saved?" This question seems always to produce a qualified response: "Perhaps," "Maybe," "If. . . ." And thus the members often feel very insecure about their relationship to God. The stuttering answers are due, of course, to the fact that these groups de-emphasize God's grace, putting the emphasis instead upon salvation-by-works or salvation-by-perfect-knowledge.

Another problem area for the Churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches is their lack of ministry to the whole person. The content of their preaching tends to be almost exclusively evangelistic or sectarian. In other words, the sermons focus on either "the plan of salvation" or "why the Church of Christ or the Christian Church is the true church of the New Testament." The result is that the members remain babes in Christ all their lives, for they are never exposed to anything but the "first principles" (see Heb. 5:11-6:2).

Even such fundamental concepts of the Christian faith as the trinity, the deity of Christ, and the atonement are ignored to the point that most members would have great difficulty making a defense of their basic beliefs (see 1 Pet. 3:15). I know from experience that the average member of the Jehovah's Witnesses could twist the average member of the Churches of Christ into a theological pretzel in about ten minutes.

Barton Stone's new churches were susceptible to cultic invasion because they were so new that they really didn't know what they believed. Stone's rallying cry was "Back to the Bible," but the members had not studied the Bible in so long—*really* studied it—that they had no idea what it taught. Most were familiar only with the Westminster Confession of Faith. When it was junked in favor of a return to the Bible, they needed some in-depth teaching as to what the Bible said. The Shakers hit them before they could get that teaching.

Two hundred years later the conservative heirs of Stone have a rather precisely worked out creedal position, but the members have accepted it by faith. It is not a product of their Bible study. The most they know are a chain of trite



"proof texts" designed to show that there are five steps in the plan of salvation and five elements of worship. They are sitting ducks for the cultist.

There is another sense in which all three wings of the Restoration Movement fail to minister to the whole person. All three take a cognitive approach to religion. They tend to minister only to the mind, ignoring the needs of the heart and the spirit. Worship tends to be stilted and cold. Little opportunity is provided for spontaneous involvement or for the expression of emotions. Interpersonal sharing is not encouraged, and there is little emphasis on the development of a personal relationship with the Lord. It is possible to be a very active church member in our heritage and still be a very lonely and alienated person.

### THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

In some respects the Disciples of Christ have provided the best atmosphere of all for cultic invasions. In their all-consuming zeal for ecumenical unity, they have thrown doctrine to the wind. Even more serious, they have accepted the tenets of historical criticism hook, line, and sinker, resulting in a depreciation of the authority of Scripture. With no "back to the Bible" emphasis and no written or unwritten creed, members hardly know what to believe.

In far too many Disciples churches, Sunday School classes have deteriorated into social clubs which spend their time reviewing the latest best-selling book or hit movie. Their preaching has come to focus more and more on social and political issues. This lack of spiritual nourishment has caused a constant decrease in membership for the past decade, and no turnaround appears to be in sight. Again, their disenchanting members are prime targets for the cults.

The Guyana Horror has created an embarrassing situation for the Disciples. The press is asking how such a group as the People's Temple could have retained membership in good standing with a mainstream, orthodox Christian church like the Disciples of Christ. The Disciples keep trying to point out that they are a congregational fellowship and that their congregations are autonomous. But the point still remains that the Disciples' hierarchy apparently did nothing about

Jim Jones and his People's Temple even after their cultic activities were exposed by *New West* magazine in 1977, an exposé that led to Jones' decision to flee to Guyana. Thus, in the Disciples' 1978 *Yearbook and Directory*, Jones is listed as an ordained minister in good standing (page m57), and his congregations are listed in two places (in the Northern California and Nevada section as "Redwood Valley—People's Temple," page S18; and in the Southern California and Nevada section as "Los Angeles—People's Temple," page S24).

Nor can these listings be easily overlooked, for the Redwood Temple is listed as having a membership of 3,364 and the Los Angeles Temple, 2,895—for a combined membership of 6,259. This is 13 percent of the total Disciples' membership in the states of California and Nevada! In fact, there is no other Disciples' congregation in those two states that comes anywhere near either of the People's Temples in size, the next largest being the First Christian Church in Santa Maria, with a membership of 921.

These facts raise serious questions for the Disciples. Have they wandered so far from their biblical commitment that they are willing to allow any group calling itself a "church" to use their name and receive official status in their *Yearbook*? Have they carried their zest for Christian unity to the point that they are willing to embrace anyone? What does it mean to be a Disciples' congregation?

### CULTS WITHIN OUR RIGHT WING

But lest you think the development of cults *within* our heritage is a danger and reality faced only by the liberal Disciples, let me hasten to point out that the same danger exists within our more conservative wings, particularly the Churches of Christ.

In their zeal for legalism, the Churches of Christ have spawned some twenty-five to thirty cult-like groups, most of whom consider themselves to be the "one and only true church of Christ." Each is represented by at least one journal whose editor serves as the sect's "Bishop." The articles reek with a totalitarian tone, as the editors issue edicts of dogma and cast paranoid expletives at all those who dare to disagree with



them. Outsiders are condemned as dishonest and lost. Insiders who ask questions are subjected to character assassination and "disfellowshipping." New converts are indoctrinated with the sacred creedal dogmas, including the fiction that there are no creedal dogmas. About the only thing that distinguishes these sects from a cult is that they hold an orthodox Christian view of Christ and his redemptive work.

But the point is that the cultic mentality is alive and well among us. A good example of this is contained in the following announcement, from a journal called "The Warrior":

Brethren: We wish to compile and publish a list of LOYAL congregations. We want to make a directory of loyal congregations for the benefit of the traveling brethren who wish to worship with loyal congregations; secondly, for the benefit of brethren who are desirous of moving to a loyal congregation. To compile this directory we need the following information. Describe every act of worship in your assemblies. Describe your position on the communion. Do you have one or two communions on Sunday? Do you use only one cup and one loaf? Do you fellowship the Sunday School or cups brethren? Do you fellowship the Old Paths Advocate? Or other digressives? Do you advocate any doctrine or act of worship that is called a hobby by most of the brotherhood? If you want to be counted among the honored few, give us correct answers to all of our questions, otherwise you will be left out of our directory. . . Are you living in a state of division, having pulled off from another congregation? Please answer all questions. Do you contend that the cup must have a handle on it? Do you contend that the cup must not have a handle on it?

Another classic example of the cultic mentality among our right wing is to be found in the journal, *Contending for the Faith*. Its editor has a widespread following of people who apparently look to him to protect the purity of the true church. Each month his journal rails against "digressives," "liberals," "false prophets," and "innovations." The latter include such startling ideas as humming a song, singing during communion, dimming lights during prayer, and pausing in the service to shake hands with those sitting nearby. The paper traffics in character assassination by

innuendo and association. In typical cultic style, the editor regularly publishes two to three pages of excerpts from letters containing slavish praise and adoration for his work. Most of the excerpts also mention money which the admirers have sent with their letters.

Yet, despite the obvious cultic tendencies of this operation, mainstream leaders among the Churches of Christ have failed to speak out against its influence. As with the Disciples, who obviously looked the other way regarding Jones, I am prompted to ask why the leadership of the Churches of Christ continues to do the same thing.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

What can we do to stem the tide of the cults? For one thing, we can do like the prophet Jeremiah did—we can stay close to God's word and speak out fearlessly against the false prophets who manipulate Christianity for their own private ends. This means restoring the word of God to the centrality of our preaching and teaching, putting aside the latest fads of psychology and sociology. It means preaching the word rather than our creeds (written or unwritten). It means preaching with belief and conviction rather than with doubt and indecisiveness. It means keeping our flocks close to the Shepherd by focusing upon Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). And it means that we should boldly denounce cultic leaders like Sun Myung Moon and those who give him aid and comfort, even from our own ranks (see Warren Lewis, "Is the Rev. Moon a Christian?" in the December issue).

Too much is at stake for us to sit idly by and allow the disciples of Satan to "disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15) and then, "like a roaring lion," devour the Lord's flocks (1 Pet. 5:8).

Our efforts in behalf of the word of God may not prevail, for our wicked and idolatrous generation may prefer to chase after charlatans. But we will at least have been true to our responsibility, and if we must suffer defeat, we will do so with the confidence that justice and righteousness will prevail in the end when our Lord returns in glory. †



# Koinonia: A Community, Not a Cult

By TRUMAN SPRING, JR.

As the aftershocks of the People's Temple earthquake in Guyana continue, I've been thinking of some ordinary Christians living in an extraordinary way in rural Georgia. Unlike Jim Jones' cult, these Christians are a *community*. They call it Koinonia, the New Testament name for community, or fellowship, and the word indicates how opposite they are from Jones' sect. Yet the community has received criticism and persecution; and God forbid that the folks who live in nearby Americus and Butler and Plains should look at Koinonia with renewed suspicion because of Guyana.

A recent visit to Koinonia was a heart-treasure kind of experience.

After we'd made our rendezvous with her at the bus station in Butler, Florence Jordan spoke to us in a rich Georgian tongue. She recounted happily and with an unmistakable warmth the early days of the community.

"When Clarence (her husband, theologian-farmer Clarence Jordan) and I first moved to Sumter County in 1942, Clarence had it in his mind to live a life based on Christ's teaching on the Mount. We wanted to show that love is stronger than hate, that his followers should share their possessions, and treat all men fairly."

Thirty-six years later, Koinonia lives and ministers on in witness to Clarence Jordan's dream,

even nine years after his death.

But it's not been a ministry without persecution.

The community, Koinonia Partners, Inc., is located a few miles outside Americus in southwestern Georgia, just twenty minutes from Plains.

On the warm October day we toured the Partnership Industries, saw the work done by Partnership Farming, and inspected the Partnership Housing communities, it was hard to visualize the burnings, boycotts, bombings, beatings, and Ku Klux Klan visitations during the late '50s and early '60s.

What we saw and heard and smelled and tasted and felt was a Christian community. An enfleshment of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. A village of people—black and white, rich and poor—making music together, the kind that results from a harmony of human fellowship when tuned by the greatest Composer of all.

It was a beehive of ongoing work, involved discussions, meaningful worship, visitors coming and leaving, mailbags being emptied and filled—all in tune to sounds of concern, agreement, disagreement, laughter, and love.

The population of Koinonia is about 350, of whom thirty-four are the partners and another twenty-five or thirty full or part-time volunteers. These residents live in individual homes. The remainder are families living in partnership housing projects, perhaps working in the industries or farming projects. But the thirty-four partners, along with their children, have committed themselves completely to the community.

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*Truman Spring, Jr., is education and youth minister at Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas.*



Koinonia is basically a one-farm operation on 1,367 acres. Principal crops are pecans, peanuts, soybeans, muscadine grapes, corn, winter cover crops, and the vital five-acre vegetable garden. At present the farming is done mostly by partners and volunteers (those who visit and work at Koinonia for a specified period of time). But the aim is to provide land at no charge, and operating capital loans at no interest, to anyone who wants to farm, but can't afford to.

Today's traditional system forces a small farmer to produce enormous crops just to meet interest payments on land and equipment—often forcing him out of business eventually, or to go on relief. Koinonia provides opportunity for the disinherited and the oppressed to farm the land.

And they do many other such things, practices that fly into the teeth of our society's values.

Eighty-six-year-old Will Wittkamper, on this autumn day when crops were being busily harvested, explained to us city folk the way all these operations are expressions of *truth*, that should be acted upon.

"The gospel is the good news of the King-

dom," he said, as we strained forward to listen. He sat in his bib overalls, having been at work in the vegetable garden. "Is all this alienation and isolation and loneliness of man, his competitiveness, his wars, his racial pride, and all this fragmentation—is all this the ways of the Kingdom?" he asked.

"The Kingdom is the love of God working through men and women to serve the needs of others. The poor, the neglected, the oppressed. That was Clarence's idea when he moved here. The Word became flesh in Clarence as plainly as any man I ever knew. He could make the words, the ideas of Christ come alive." Will's aged eyes sparkled.

The kingdom of God on earth is what Koinonia is all about.

"What the poor need is not charity, but capital, not caseworkers, but co-workers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable, and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance," according to *The Cotton Patch Evidence*, a history of Jordan and Koinonia.

The community is probably most proud of

**Will Wittkamper, 86, tends his strawberries at Koinonia.**





Partnership Housing. Homes, over seventy of them, have been built for the rural poor on half-acre homesites. Houses are built for an average cost of about \$13,000, and sold at cost, interest-free, usually for about \$750 down and \$65 a month. The poor of Sumter County who had no hopes of ever owning a home now live in well-constructed, three- and four-bedroom houses.

Partnership Industries provide employment for almost a hundred men and women. These include sewing and handcrafts, a flourishing pecan-shelling plant, fruit cake bakery, candy kitchen, and pottery operation. Sufficient income is made from these industries to meet the cost-of-living needs of all the partners. It is the aim of each industry to develop so that the workers themselves, initially employed by Koinonia Partners, may acquire the necessary skills to become a self-determining unit. The needy are the only "shareholders" that Koinonia recognizes.

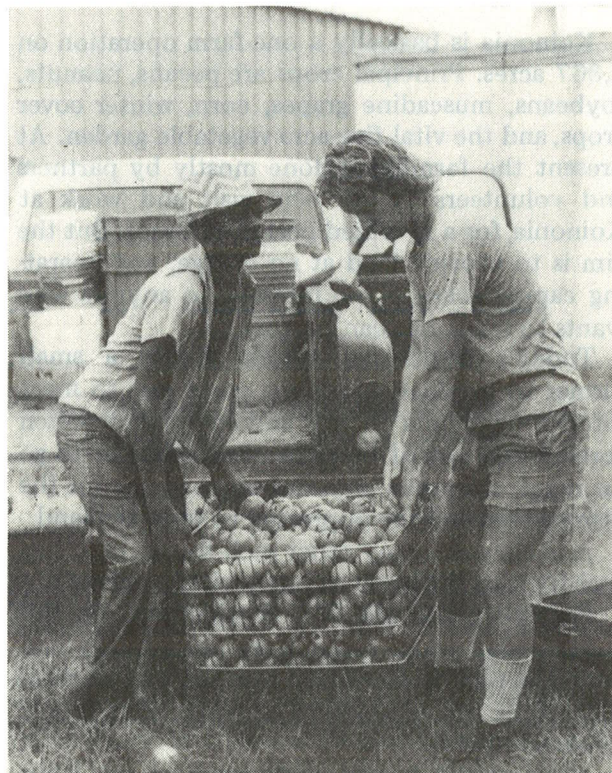
There is also a Child Development Center, the co-op grocery store (Community Cooperative of Sumter County, Inc.) where you'd pay anywhere from 20 percent to 50 percent less for your groceries, black-white reconciliation programs, tutoring for youth and adults, youth ministry programs, solar energy experiments, and involvement with the town of Americus through church and school organizations.

It is a multi-faceted, thriving place. The partners and volunteers have amazing creativity and organization. There is a lot of hard work, daily. It's a well-structured community. There are elected elders, a coordinator, and a board of directors (made up of the coordinator and twenty professionals from the outside, nationwide).

At lunchtime, which is daily a common meal for the entire community, we were welcomed to a table heavily-laden with wonderfully fresh and delicious foods. You wouldn't believe the peanut butter and all the breads and vegetables.

I sat down next to an older gentleman dressed in a simple cotton shirt, khaki pants, and old, black basketball shoes. His manner was gracious and unaffected. He answered my questions openly and warmly. I guessed him to be in his early sixties.

"My wife and I were looking for a way to practice what we had always preached. We knew about Clarence Jordan through his "Cotton



**Race doesn't count at harvest-time.**

Patch" versions (of the New Testament), and we had heard of Koinonia. We made a visit here about three years ago and later decided to move back."

I discovered he had been a minister, a Methodist area bishop, and a teacher of theology for several years. Here he worked in the print shop and garden.

"My son is a young minister in Michigan. He thinks his parents have gone off the deep end," he laughingly offered. "Now there's a switch for you!"

Yes, the whole Koinonia experience was a switch for me, and for many of the 5,000 people who visit the community each year. Many visit, but few stay. . . .

Which started me thinking, as we drove back down the dirt road to the narrow, Georgia farm-to-market. What we have here is a group of ordinary Christians, but they are living in an extraordinary fashion. And I was left with a question difficult to face, let alone answer: Why *extra* ordinary?

†



# Golf, Art, Life, Good, and Jesus

(Or, The Meaning of My Life)

## A-NNUSING

By G. JAMES ROBINSON

I am sitting in my basement in St. Louis, Missouri, deep in the heart of America. I am typing.

I am typing because I want to write. I am trying to improve my typing so I can buy a new typewriter and make good use of it.

Today I played nine holes of golf and hit the ball real, real crisply. It was very uplifting to hit the ball well because the last couple times out I didn't hit it so well and that bothers me because I want to play in some tournaments this year, not just the little two-bit tourneys but the State Amateur and a few more.

Man, do I like to play golf. I don't know why. I guess I should not try to analyze it; I have fouled up some good things in my time trying to overanalyze. I just love to be out in the open with fine, cut grass under my feet. There is a beginning and an end. The first hole is the beginning and the last hole is the end. Also, you get to keep score in a very simple way, just count the number of times you have to hit the ball. The utter simplicity of this whole scenario we call golf may be the thing that attracts all of us avid golfers.

Another part of it is that golf is a form of art. You have the opportunity to create shots. Laugh, I don't care. Art is what you make it. I say golf is art. It is my kind of expression, so for me, it is an important art form. A ball sits on the green grass and you take this funny looking stick and try to hit the ball way down

the fairway and onto a little round green spot called the green. When you hit it on the green, the fun starts.

Strange isn't it, how we can get so much pleasure out of little things like that. Man is capable of enjoying a lot of things. I am thankful to someone that we have been made so we can enjoy immensely lots of little things like that. Some people enjoy fishing and others like hunting and some like reading and I like playing golf and writing.

As a matter of fact, I guess I like writing better than just about anything I have ever found on this earth that I could do.

Sometimes I wonder seriously if there is more good on the earth than bad. There have been times in my life that I figured beyond a shadow of a doubt that life consisted of more bad things than good, but I am convinced now that this isn't the case. We remember the bad things longer for some reason (perhaps because they are a novelty) but that does not mean that there are more bad things happening in the world than good. Good things happen all the time, so constantly that we don't even realize it. We don't even remember they are happening.

Just a few minutes ago I was pounding away some very negative stuff on this very typewriter. Then Armetta called me upstairs to say goodnight to Ryan. His big, blue eyes sparkled when I walked into the room. We played for a few minutes and laughed some. Of course he is the most precious kid in the whole world and he brings tons and tons of joy and pleasure into our lives each day and into the lives of a whole lot more people on Sunday. It is so easy to take moments like that for

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*With this installment, G. James Robinson begins a new column in Mission. He is pulpit minister at the Central Church of Christ in St. Louis, Missouri.*



granted, to just have them and not think about them any more and at the end of the day when you remember what happened to you that day you don't count the laughs and smiles that you have had from your own son.

How can anyone with kids ever become unhappy and despairing? Oh, I know it could happen when the kids go rotten and sour. And I know that if anything ever happened to Ryan I would go crazy and would never ever again be able to see any good in the world or in the idea of God. You know what? I don't see how a parent who has loved their kids and nurtured them and helped them grow up and then see them die in some strange kind of acci-

dent could ever believe in any thing good again. I doubt if they ever do.

Well, time will tell. Some day I will know if life has more good than bad in it. It all depends on the next thirty years for me, if I have the privilege of living that long. I am not real sure yet who is going to win. Good or evil?

Sounds a little sad I know, but I have to admit that this is the real me and this is where I am. I am not real sure life is worthwhile for some people to live. My only hope is that Jesus was who he thought he was. Jesus, I hope you were who you thought you were. We're counting on you, Jesus.

Oh—I shot a 38 on nine.

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## A Fellowship of the Blind

By BILL LOVE

Whoever invented the fable of the blind men and the elephant seemed to have three things he wanted to say. First, the elephant was a much more wonderful beast with many more aspects than any of the men would allow. Second, that the reason for each man's narrowness was not his blindness but his pretension to have a comprehensive view of the animal. And finally, this attitude destroyed any fellowship the men could have had, since each felt superior to his fellows.

As Christians we believe that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and that in seeing Jesus we see the Father. The problem is that we forget that our seeing is always fragmentary and limited. As we look at the Son one sees an evangelist, another sees a healer, and a third sees a philosopher. Our pretension to a comprehensive understanding prevents us from seeing that he is all of these things and more. When we are reluctant to admit our blindness, our fellowship becomes a loose association of believers who compete to win acceptance for their various understandings of the faith. It becomes impossible for us to share with one another our various discoveries of the love of God in this competitive atmosphere.

The story of Jesus' healing of the blind man in John 9 is filled with double meanings. After Jesus healed him, the man was cross-examined by the Pharisees. His answer showed a beautiful balance of humility and conviction: "I don't know all the answers, but I do know that I was blind and now I see." As the Pharisees heard Jesus explaining the miracle, they huffed, "So we are blind too, are we?" Jesus explained that their blindness was not fatal, but their pretension to a comprehensive view of God was.

If we accept the invitation John offers to believe in Jesus, we, too, can come to that balance of humility and conviction found in the confession of the man who was healed. And only as we come to this attitude, can a true, nurturing Christian fellowship exist among us.

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# Rethinking the Alternatives

By ROY WILLBERN

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is responding to questions about marriage and man/woman relationship.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does.

In this most basic of all man/woman relationships the Spirit reveals through the apostle Paul that in Christ there is absolute equality between woman and man. The man does not rule his own body—his wife does. The woman does not rule her own body—her husband does.

This concept is startling in its implications. It is in striking contrast with the male supremacy syndrome which permeates the "order of creation" scriptures, noted in Part I of this series. From this concept of *mutuality* emerges the prospect of an alternative to woman's subjection due to the fall.

The next movement in this breakthrough is also found in 1 Corinthians, this time in chapter 11. Here Paul, following the traditionally accepted order-of-creation, man-above-woman approach, suggests that a woman praying or prophesying should wear a veil:

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman

is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels.

After this puzzling reference to angels, Paul hesitates. The Revised Standard Version puts verse 11 in parenthesis:

(Nevertheless, *in the Lord* woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; and all things are from God.)

In this parenthetical hesitation, Paul catches himself and qualifies the traditional Jewish order-of-creation argument by indicating that *now, in the Lord*, man and woman are on a different basis, equally dependent upon each other. Now, in the Lord, the new relationship of reconciliation and redemption is beginning to appear.

**T**he third movement in the breakthrough is enunciated by the same apostle in that passionate plea for freedom in Christ, the Galatian letter. Recall that the consequences of sin in the garden, and the downward spiral of mankind throughout Old Testament history, portrays the fragmentation, disharmony, and alienation of Jew from pagan, of master from servant, and man from woman. Tension because of race, because of slavery, and because of gender has been at the root of most of humanity's problems. But the Spirit speaking through the pen of Paul, offers new hope in Galatians 3:26-29:

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are

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*This is the concluding article in the series by Roy Willbern, Mission trustee and former elder in the Southwest Church of Christ in Houston.*



all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Thus the new principle is set forth, shining as a brilliant beacon for all time in Christ. This principle is consistent with God's eternal purpose of reconciliation of all things in Christ. This principle is consistent with God's offer of redemption to all who believe. It is consistent with the idea that a Christian is a child of Abraham, an heir of the father. The Christian is a member of royalty in the house of God. The Christian is a priest in the true temple. The Christian is redeemed, justified, sanctified, and glorified. The Christian is transformed into the image of God. And females are Christians!

As Krister Stendahl says, in *The Bible and the Role of Women*:

Such an assertion (Gal. 3:28) is a theological statement. . . it should be noted that this statement is directed against what we call the order of creation, and consequently it creates a tension with those biblical passages by which this order of creation maintains its place in the fundamental view of the New Testament concerning the subordination of women.

I suggest that the apostle Paul here acknowledges and asserts the true meaning of reconciliation for male and female through Christ. The acknowledgement is opposed to the sociological reality of the man/woman relationship under the law and under the existing Jewish customs. It is a theological pointer to the desired relationship when the nature of new life in Christ is more fully realized by the church.

Now, how did it work out in that first century while the New Testament was being written? The apostle Paul devoted his life to reconciling Jew and Greek in the Lord. The book of Acts and virtually all the New Testament letters reveal the conflict between the Judaizers and the proponents of freedom in Christ. The Spirit had to reveal to Peter that Gentiles could be Christian, too. While Peter and James worked with the Jews, Paul and Barnabas and others took the good news to Gentiles all over the civilized world. Trouble makers from the Jews in Jerusalem plagued Paul almost everywhere he went. He and Peter had a face-to-face confrontation over the matter in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21) and in the council in Jerusalem, described in Acts 15. Paul

convinced (with the aid of the Spirit) even the partisan, James, who finally gave Paul his commendation.

By the end of that first century, not only were Gentiles fully accepted on an equal basis with Jews as Christians, but the major growth of Christianity was manifested with the Gentiles. The principle of reconciliation—"neither Jew nor Greek"—was fully demonstrated in the first century of the church.

Now how about "neither slave nor free"? Paul and the other apostles enunciated the principle of equality in Christ and gently encouraged it, but they didn't hit it head-on as they did the Jew/Greek conflict. Perhaps there is only so much good that can be accomplished with mankind in one generation. Perhaps the deeply embedded economic and social customs of the centuries could not be rectified that quickly. Perhaps the pace at which the Spirit accomplishes God's regenerating purposes in our hearts is slower than we really understand. The apostles laid down the principles, and in that beautiful story of Philemon and his slave who became his brother, Onesimus, Paul suggested the pattern. At any rate it took 1,800 years for slavery to be abolished by Christians. Our own generation is yet hindered by the scars. But who can doubt but that it has been the purpose and mighty power of the Spirit of God which finally set slaves free?

Now, at long last, God's people are being forced to consider this third area of tension, male and female. Various forces are at work, focusing our attention on the problem. Improved education of both women and men is at the fore. Advanced communication, economic necessities, growing awareness of the meaning of being a person, and many other pressures call attention to the problem and demand that leaders in the church honestly and openly deal with the tension.

For us who have grown up as fundamentalist Bible followers it is difficult to cope with the apparently clear-cut statements of the "order of creation" scriptures, even though the "joint heirs of the grace of life" passages so clearly point the direction of freedom. Somehow we feel safer in saying "No" if there is any doubt that can be raised, than we feel in saying "Yes" when the path is clearly lighted.



This study has forced me to face at least three new concepts concerning biblical interpretation.

1. The first has to do with my lifelong loyalty to and faith in the writings of the apostle Paul. How can Paul tell the Christian women in Corinth to be silent and in subjection—subordinate to and under the domination of men, and encourage men to require these things of women, when the same Paul points out so clearly the meaning of reconciliation and redemption and points so clearly to the desired equality of male and female in Christ? Can it be that Paul did not always understand the situation fully? Is it possible for an apostle to make a mistake? Or can it be that the Spirit, with Paul's knowledge—or that Paul without veto from the Spirit—accommodated first-century Christianity to the climate of society? On the one hand, he enunciated an order that would work under the existing circumstances. On the other hand, he spoke a vision of a better day. And the burden is on us to bring about the better day, *seeing* the vision and making it real.

**I** suggest that it is possible for a Christian to recognize that the apostle's work is incomplete, and for that Christian to still be faithful to Christ. Peter, who had the vision which allowed Cornelius, the Gentile soldier, to become a Christian, faltered and retreated to the Jews and was reprimanded by Paul for it. And one of the most puzzling stories in the New Testament to me is in Acts 21:17-26, where Paul surrendered to the Jews and participated in Jewish rites and ceremonies and vows. This was entirely inconsistent with his stand for freedom. He did it as an accommodation to the situation in Jerusalem.

So it seems that apostles, devoted to the truth revealed by Jesus Christ, can in the realm of humanity live and speak in line with where they are and with the human demands of the particular situation. Yet this level of living and speaking does not nullify the basic truth of Christ's revelation. Paul helps me to cope with these difficult situations in 2 Corinthians 3:6—"our competence is from God who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." I learn from this that God has put a burden on me to discriminate. I must make personal choices. When the letter of a statement by an apostle in one situation is in-

consistent with the spirit of revealed principles in another situation, then I must choose the spirit, which leads to life.

I believe that the apostle Paul accommodated his advice to the particular sociological situation which existed in the male-dominated climate of the first century. Practically, he did what he could under the circumstances. But in the "joint heirs of the grace of life" scriptures, the Spirit pointed us to a better way.

2. The second concept that has demanded new understanding as a result of this study is the meaning of the "restoration theology" which dominates much of fundamentalist biblical religion. That idea simply stated is that the twentieth century church should be restored in the likeness of the church of the first century. Worship, organization, doctrine, practices should be made to conform as nearly as possible to the way things were in the first century. Restoration theology points in the direction of taking Paul's advice to the church in Corinth as valid for man/woman relationships in the church today. Restoration theology would accept the literal statements of Paul to a first century situation, and ignore the principles of reconciliation and redemption for women as well as men, ignore the vision of Galatians 3:28, and leave the church frozen in the existential situation of the first century.

**T**hough much of Restoration theology is valid, I now realize it must not be mistaken for the gospel of Christ. For example, strict restorationism would restore the master/slave relationship in its first century status. Again I must make a choice in the direction of life, and away from crystallization and death.

3. The third concept that I have had to rethink is my attitude toward how to interpret the Scriptures. The posture I usually took in the past was to try to understand what the Scriptures really said in the light of the circumstances prevailing when they were written. I believed that God possessed all truth; that he gave such revelation as he considered appropriate to his prophets, apostles, and other spokesmen; that they understood what was revealed to them and made proper application in the time and situations in which they lived and spoke and wrote; that we should try to understand them, their times and circumstances—and that was enough.



I still believe in the once-for-all nature of the incarnation of Christ. I believe the Bible is complete and sufficient. I do not believe in any later revelation. But I now believe the Spirit is alive and active in Christians today; that each time I seek God through the Scriptures the Spirit is there with me and there is a real encounter where God's transforming power flows through his word molding and changing my life. God is not dead. In his providence he directs the destinies of men and nations. His people are conditioned and modified by the forces of the history of all the centuries. The Christian who reads the Bible today is not the same person who read those divine messages 2,000 years ago.

And that message is not dead. The life that it communicates speaks to today's Christian in the midst of today's culture. We have an advantage today that first century Christians did not have. We can see the effect the living Word has had on Christians over these past 2,000 years. We can see results from its various interpretations—some that have pointed to joy and peace and life, and some that have pointed to heartache and tension and death. And we have responsibility for making choices. Our interpretation and application of Scripture must be in the light of the continu-

ing life of the Spirit, who helps us to understand. God is not finished with his people yet.

So, what's the point of all of this? If Christian men and women who understand God's reconciling and redemptive processes can view themselves once more as they were in the garden before sin appeared, then their burdens can be lifted, they can be whole again. Mankind, male and female, will truly be in the image of God. Woman's burden through the centuries has been plain to see. Subordinate and submissive, she has been victimized and abused. In defense she has sometimes become devious and manipulative, gaining control through subterfuge, using man's own perverted ego to counter his purposes. This has been her guilt as well as her burden.

And man, exercising dominion, has viewed himself as something special, better than woman; he has become swollen in self esteem. Pride has placed him presumptuously between woman and God. The subtle temptation "to think of oneself more highly than one ought" has captured us. And this is our burden and our guilt. But as joint heirs of the grace of life, man and woman together, creatures of God's handiwork, side by side in his kingdom, can accept forgiveness and healing and life through Jesus Christ. †

*My brother, Oh, my brother!  
Why hast thou dealt me thus?  
Could there have been any other  
That should have been dearer than us?  
Are we not both Adam's seed?  
Shared we not our mother's womb!  
Had sin yet a deeper need  
To give the world a darker gloom?*

*My brother, Oh, my brother!  
My blood for vengeance cries  
Until the ages bring another  
Whose Spirit never dies!  
How could I better learn  
Within my short life's span  
That more than vengeance from blood should come  
From One—the Son of Man!  
My blood, for vengeance, the earth shall swallow up.  
Yet Another, with blood for mercy,  
Shall drink the bitter cup!*

—Adapted

## *Abel's Cry*

By WILLIAM F. CARTER



# A Recently-Deceased Atheist Meets His Maker

By WILLIAM H. DAVIS

Atheist: I vigorously protest!

God: What else is new? Exactly what are you protesting now?

A: Several things. The title of this dialogue, to begin with.

G: What about it? Oh, I see. I suppose you want "atheist" changed to "ex-atheist."

A: No. I never was an atheist. I was always an *agnostic*.

G: A fine distinction. I never quite caught it.

A: Well, there's a lot of difference, and you know it.

G: Not in practice. But anyway we'll change the title to "ex-agnostic."

A: No. "Agnostic." I still am one.

G: What do you mean by that?

A: Well, you may take offense if you wish, but I'm still not *sure* of who you are.

G: What would you like for me to do? I don't have an ID. Would you like for me to create a small, sample universe right before your eyes?

A: Don't bother.

G: Why not? It's no trouble.

A: You just won't see the point, will you? No *trick* you could do would prove you are God—the God with all those infinite powers and so forth.

G: Well, if it can't be proved in principle, what are you complaining about? You know very well that I've never been pleased with all this talk of proof. You don't ask for proof in life, but about me it was always "proof! proof!" Wasn't that somewhat inconsistent as well as personally insulting?

A: Don't you think belief should be proportioned to evidence?

G: Not always. You always believed better of your friends than the evidence would have allowed. And you certainly believed better of yourself than the evidence would have permitted.

A: That's different.

G: No. The principle is the same.

A: I can't agree with that, but I don't want to debate it. In any case you've got to admit that the world was terribly misleading in respect to giving evidence for your existence.

G: I wouldn't say it was misleading, just inconclusive. By the way, you were the one who suggested that no complete proofs are possible. And in any case, lots and lots of people managed to believe in me and even love me in the same world you found misleading.

A: They were simple, credulous people.

G: That's the kind of people I like. I made that clear in certain of my communications. I never liked the lawyer type.

A: What about the credulous people that believed in Father Divine or in sacred cows?

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*Dr. Bill Davis teaches philosophy at Auburn University. He has the Ph.D. in philosophy from Rice University.*



- G: Some of them are very nice people and I can take care of them. Others of them more or less knowingly rejected me for those other silly things. And that's not a matter of credulity; that's a matter of who you choose for a friend. I really do want people to be my friends.
- A: Especially the simple-minded.
- G: Well, at least they don't go around saying "proof, proof." You'll never know how that offends me.
- A: A lot of them thought they *had* proofs.
- G: Yes. Well, I never was particularly pleased with that.
- A: But they get credit for being right, when it was for the wrong reasons?
- G: Nobody gets any credit for being right or discredit for being wrong. You get a friend for liking someone.
- A: Your logic escapes me.
- G: Logic isn't very edifying.
- A: I thought you were supposed to be omniscient or something.
- G: Yes, a lot of my admirers said things like that, but you know how fans get carried away. But *I* never mislead you on that point. I mean, look at my book.
- A: You were supposed to have created the world. That took a lot of logic.
- G: Well, yes. But it wasn't edifying work, even for me.
- A: I thought you just spoke things into being.
- G: Yes, but you've got to think them up first. Yours was a complex universe. I was exhausted that Friday evening. Mental work is the hardest work of all, you know.
- A: I protest being held here against my will.
- G: I'm very sorry but I'm everywhere. I can't help that.
- A: I thought hell was the absence of your presence.
- G: Not exactly. You can't avoid my presence, which in the last analysis is what makes you so uncomfortable, but you can get around *behind* me, so you don't have to behold what my admirers call my glory.
- A: Behind you! What nonsense.
- G: Technically, maybe. It's just a manner of speaking.
- A: Allegorical, I suppose. I was always offended by allegory. You never were one for plain speech.
- G: Your attitude stinks. Why do you want to be so petulant?
- A: Why do *you* want to be so petulant?
- G: You bring out the worst in me.
- A: That's silly.
- G: No, It's literally true. I become for people what they believe I am. It's one of my more subtle touches. I call it "faith."
- A: I call faith believing without evidence.
- G: No. That misses the point. The point is that you didn't believe because you didn't want to, and you didn't want to because you didn't find the idea of me attractive. But that's exactly why I hid myself from you: so you could form any idea of me you wanted to. You didn't like the idea of me that *you* made.
- A: I got my idea of you from your book and your followers—"slaves" I believe they whimperingly called themselves.
- G: Ah, yes. You must forgive these words of endearment among friends. But anyway, as you yourself always used to point out, there was always a lot of data in that book to choose from and among.
- A: I thought we were supposed to take it all.
- G: Well, sure. But you could balance it out as you pleased. Actually, the Bible was just like the world, very vague, very liable to interpretation. You see, I am highly plastic to your image of me. Your own conscious and subconscious decisions are making both you and me into fairly disagreeable characters. In fact (and please don't construe this as a threat) I'm even now holding your subconscious in check. If I turn it loose, you will find yourself in "hell." Which means you will have become so offensive that I'll have to put you "behind me."
- A: What would you like for me to do? Worship you?
- G: I appreciate the offer. But you've got a bad misunderstanding of what worship is.
- A: I got it from preachers.
- G: OK. But let me explain the situation to you. Worship is a party you throw for a friend. A bash. That's really very plain from my book, but lots of people, even my friends, got this notion that I was an Oriental despot. And of course since they had that idea I had to meet them somewhat on those terms. But actually I just wanted to be friends with people. I've always cherished the memory of those pleasant walks and talks I used to have with Adam before the, uh, unpleasantness arose between us. Oh



- well, I don't want to bother you with my problems. But David could have given you a good idea of what I had in mind.
- A: David Hume?
- G: No, no! David. David. *King* David. The Psalms!
- A: Oh.
- G: Didn't you ever read them?
- A: A little.
- G: You weren't impressed?
- A: There's a lot of nastiness in them.
- G: There you go again, misplacing your emphasis. Nobody ever said David was perfect.
- A: He was supposed to be "after your own heart."
- G: Sure. He was! That just shows how little I ask from my friends.
- A: A lot of your friends are sick, like Kierkegaard.
- G: *Were* sick.
- A: Well, he *was* not a very good advertisement for you.
- G: You know a man's choice of friends is sometimes inexplicable, and so is a God's. Sometimes there's just good chemistry there.
- A: An awful lot of your friends were simply bilious and nasty.
- G: You're one to speak.
- A: That's a logical fallacy. "*Ad hominum*."
- G: I'm weak on logic.
- A: But strong on friendship.
- G: You're coming along. Besides you ought to know that *all* men were terribly sick. With some it just showed more than others. So from that standpoint, all of my friends were sick. I had to hold my nose. But what are friends for? They are OK now though. But you still wouldn't like them. They're even more simple and credulous than ever. They are full of love, and "love believes all things."
- A: Let me tell you something. You don't talk like God. Neither the God of the Bible nor the God of my imagination, which I'm presumably projecting.
- G: I'm talking like you talk. Whoever talks to me sees a giant reflection of himself. You remember I used to say, "As you judge others, so you will be judged." Or, "As is your faith, so be it unto you"? Those are broad principles. Pretty philosophical, too, in spite of people always saying there's no philosophy in the Bible. No desiccated logic-chopping maybe, but some pretty heavy stuff, nonetheless.
- A: You're rambling. Can't you stick to one point?
- G: I don't have to, you know.
- A: What is the point of this conversation, anyhow?
- G: There doesn't have to be a point, does there?
- A: No.
- G: Actually, I like you. Just thought we'd have a chat. See what might come of it.
- A: Has anything come of it?
- G: Not to appearances. But appearances can be deceiving, can't they? I mean, the appearances of the world deceived you, didn't they?
- A: Maybe so.
- G: Actually, you know, I do like you. You've always had *spirit*.
- A: Why don't we just say "spunk."
- G: You don't give up easy, do you? Not only do you *have* spirit, you *are* one.
- A: Don't rub it in.
- You know, I was perfectly willing to disappear from the scene forever. You are doing me no favor by keeping me around.
- G: Sure you are ready to disappear. So is anyone who has done a bit of nastiness.
- A: I'm not conscious of having done any particular nastiness.
- G: Would you like me to recite some instances? I mean I could bring to your attention some really dreadful items, which maybe you have managed to forget.
- A: So you're counting and keeping records, are you? That's not very gracious.
- G: No. I'm not. It's your own brain, your own person that's counting and keeping records. I'm just reading off what I see there. And that stuff has wreaked some terrible havoc on your psyche. In fact, you stink from all the rottenness.
- A: My friends didn't find me so bad.
- G: You had smelly friends.
- A: Some of your friends stank.
- G: But no more.
- A: Well, spray some of your deoderant on me.
- G: It doesn't work that way. You have to embrace me. You have to let me swallow you up in love. Then you'll be clean.
- A: You're perverted.
- G: Someone is.



# BOOKS

*By Bobbie Lee Holley*

Readers are invited to submit reviews to Mrs. Holley,  
at 1508 Ephesus Church Rd., Chapel Hill,  
North Carolina 27514.

*Cry Dignity!* by John L. Peters. (Oklahoma City: World Neighbors, Inc., 1976), 111 pp. \$3.50. Reviewed by N. L. Reinsch, Jr.

In the last days of World War II, Army Chaplain John Peters was on Mindanao in the Philippines, a time and place where "man's inhumanity was stark naked and stinking mean." After the explosion of an artillery shell overhead, he dug his heels into a slimy hillside and held a wounded Tennessee boy in his arms while he bled to death. That night in a foxhole he made a promise: "If I get out of here alive, I'm going to do something, somehow, somewhere."

*World Neighbors*, the organizational result of that promise, was twenty years old in 1976. This book, a brief history of World Neighbors, is important reading for anyone interested in being a neighbor to the impoverished citizens of the "third" and "fourth" worlds.

After the war, Peters attended Yale, then became a teacher at Oklahoma City University and the morning preacher for St. Luke's Methodist Church. He gradually concluded that "what I had said to God in that foxhole was just something you say to God in a foxhole," until a speech by Douglas MacArthur re-ignited the memories of suffering humanity. The next Sunday he discarded his prepared sermon and challenged his hearers to meet real needs with real solutions.

The response was immediate and overwhelming. Money was donated. Assistance was offered. A group of businessmen promised to "back John

Peters 100 percent in what he wants to do." After discussion with a variety of religious and governmental spokesmen, World Neighbors gradually took shape.

The effort was framed as an independent Oklahoma City-based organization designed to serve as a helpful Samaritan to the needy citizens of other countries. The goal is to

multiply programs and projects which offer a hand up, rather than a handout; which encourage self-help rather than dependence; which provide small loans rather than large gifts; which work with nationals rather than outsiders; which reward worthy individuals rather than corrupt bureaucrats; which enhance native values rather than impose alien customs; which foster dignity rather than engender servility; which develop mutual respect rather than encourage hostility; which serve the "whole man" rather than some isolated interest.

The story is told in two sections. In the first, Peters provides a personal account of the origins and development of World Neighbors. The second contains photographs, including many of actual projects throughout the world.

Peters acknowledges, but does not always discuss, mistakes that were made. But the text and pictures also make clear that he and his associates gradually derived principles and practices which have permitted lasting improvements in the lives of thousands.

They rely, whenever possible, on local initiative, local materials, and local decision-making. To these native assets World Neighbors adds information, encouragement, and financial support (often in the form of revolving loans). Students in World Neighbors courses are encouraged to become, in turn, teachers of their countrymen. The results are impressive.

Farmers in India have prepared compost pits, dug irrigation wells, tried new crops, and trebled their incomes. By one estimate the \$563,000 which World Neighbors invested in one Indian district between 1962 and 1974 stimulated the production of more than \$24 million worth of additional food for local consumption.

Guatemalans have improved their diets, instituted better hygienic procedures, established well-baby clinics, reduced the incidence of dysentery, and chopped the infant mortality rate which once exceeded 40 percent in some areas. In November of 1971 a survey of 650 Guatemalan families found that in the past year 465 children under the age of five had died; in 1974 only 24 such deaths were reported.

In Tanzania, young Masai tribesmen, once interested primarily in fighting and in accumulating cattle, have learned to care for their cattle with chemical dips and better pasture. They are also constructing buildings for schools, clinics, and better homes.

The list could go on. Projects are currently being supported in twenty-nine African, Asian, and Latin-American countries. Even allowing for more difficulties and failures than Peters discusses, it is clear that World Neighbors is helping many people rescue themselves from disease, malnutrition, over-population, and an early death.

The joy of any past accomplishments are for Peters, however, "simply fuel for the long, hard road ahead." And indeed the future does look difficult. Poverty and disease persist in many parts of the world and are exacerbated by continued population growth. Meanwhile, Americans may be turning inward, away from the persistent sacrifices necessary to help citizens of other nations.

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# MOMIES

BY ALLAN MCNICOL

*Interiors*. United Artists. Produced and directed by Woody Allen. Main stars: Geraldine Page and E. G. Marshall.

The last time we left Woody Allen, in *Annie Hall*, he was going about what he seems to do best: parody. True, the viability of commitment in the male-female relationship is a rather serious subject; but Allen with creativity and a touch of genius was nevertheless able to produce both pathos and laughter which is the impact of the comic effect in all good parody.

In *Interiors*, Allen has taken a completely different turn. In serious vein, *a la* Bergman, Allen has tried to become what he attempted once to mimic. Frankly, this leads him into a lot of trouble. For, on the one hand, he is making what we would call a "statement film" which he wishes obviously to be treated with the utmost seriousness. On the other hand, his use of various sequences throughout the film is so derived from other directors that the viewer sometimes is tempted to ask himself, "Isn't this film Allen's ultimate attempt at parody?"

Also, there are some changes in the tone of thought in this movie in comparison with Allen's earlier adventures. The most noticeable is that his earlier preoccupation to interpret reality through the modern Jewish experience is missing. In its place Allen substitutes a sober look at reality from the point of view of the wasteland of contemporary secular

experience uninformed by any particular religious or ethnic stance. Nevertheless, Allen's earlier penchant for reflection on such things as death, guilt, and the sex-hungry male still surface from time to time, indicating some continuity with the past.

*Interiors* is a story about a wealthy New York family. The husband (E.G. Marshall) is a lawyer who is the quintessence of American corporate efficiency. The dramatic action of the movie really commences when one morning at breakfast Marshall, with coldheartedness (he had done his duty as a provider, the three children are grown) tells his wife that he wants a trial separation. His style and manner indicate that this decision has been thought through and must now be implemented just like any other decision in business, regardless of human costs.

And the costs are tremendous. Geraldine Page, Marshall's wife, a perfectionist in the way in which she took care of the interior of her home and her family in her earlier years, has already suffered a nervous breakdown because of guilt over her performance. Instead of staying with her and seeing this situation as an opportunity to demonstrate truly committed love—in Thielicke's word, "the worse it gets, the tighter the loving hands hold on"—Marshall wants to move out and add new experiences

and dimensions to his life. He leaves a bewildered woman who can only live on the dreams of the past and whose only thread of hope is a possible reconciliation with her husband. Late in the movie that thread of hope is gone when Marshall remarries and, predictably, Page commits suicide.

Little wonder with this example for a father that his three daughters manifest a lot of *Angst*; but they themselves can only incarnate in their own lives the frustrations of their inadequacies without any real hope for a whole existence.

Much has been made about the depressing overtones of the first half of the film. Certainly the tone is grim. The stark, grey interior of the house where most of the action takes place adequately expresses the inner barrenness of the lives of Marshall's family. But the fact that his latest female interest (Maureen Stapleton) brings a new vibrancy to his life (and Allen chooses to highlight this by focusing on her plebeian desires and outrageous color selections in clothes) should not distract us from the real pathos of the situation. Marshall's only hope for change and renewal is to spend his life with a philistine. Perhaps this is escape? Maybe it is an example of Allen's pessimism about man? Certainly it is a caricature of what Marshall seeks.

In reflecting upon this film one has a sense of uneasiness that there is something about it that is just wrong. It is not the actors. They all do a more than adequate job with the script available. In fact it would not surprise me if Geraldine Page is nominated for an Oscar for her performance. No, the problem is in Allen's abandoning parody from the point of view of the Jewish experience. Thus he is only able to produce another example of the genre of what I call "the pits of the human condition." Such directors as Bergman and Rohmer have done these things much better, and we do not now need to add to the genre. My advice to the Christian moviegoer is to treat *Interiors* as an aberration from the basic course of Allen's directing, and to hope that he fulfills his earlier promise in working creatively with parody. †



# FORUM

## On Weed and Women

I appreciate Dr. Michael Weed's reflections on "The Banality of Evil" (October issue) as the first such discussion I have seen within the Church of Christ community. However, I'm disappointed with the depth and breadth of his reflections. Albert Speer did not claim any religious loyalties that might transcend his obligations to work and country. But there were many in Germany who *did* claim such loyalties—Christians who were faced with the choice to either join the movement [which produced the holocaust], watch it passively, or fight it in any way they could. Most chose to stand by and watch; they were "apolitical."

In conclusion, Dr. Weed enjoins us, children of the Restoration, to "recognize our plight" and "repent." But for me the discussion begins where Dr. Weed ends. What do a Christian's loyalties demand of him/her in this global community where it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore one's social and political ties, not only to the local community but to the entire human population and the nations they belong to? Perhaps instead of citing examples of American medical and scientific research, Dr. Weed should have mentioned the possible political and social implications of Christian missionary work in the Third World and in non-WASP communities in the U.S. Where are human suffering and injustice being

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But John Peters counts himself "among that stubborn number who believe that together, and by the grace of God, there's no worthy task impossible of accomplishment."

There are probably few readers who can agree with all of the practices of World Neighbors. But almost anyone interested in, or involved with, foreign mission work could learn something valuable from this exciting account. †

perpetuated in our *world*, and what is our responsibility as members of society, with Christ as our moral ground outside that society, to that suffering and injustice? Can a Christian be apolitical?

I suggest that we begin by talking to some of our "denominational" brothers and sisters who have already become involved in these questions and answers about political responsibility. In the name of Christ, it is full well time to put aside some of those all-important interpretational differences and get about the business of being Christians of a united Kingdom under Christ.

And regarding your November issue [on the role of women], I am deeply pleased with what I read. In spite of the fact that I consider myself an ecumenical Christian with no official ties to any denomination (or non-denomination), all concerns and movements of my childhood church, the Church of Christ, greatly concern me. Some day, perhaps, there will be a place in this church for my words and vision as a woman. Meanwhile, I worship and work where my peculiar gifts are needed. Thank you for continued inspiration.

Tamis Hoover Renteria  
Davis, California

## On Capital Punishment

The article "By Man Shall His Blood Be Shed" (favoring capital punishment, September issue), was engrossing but mistakenly refers to capital punishment as "punishment." Punishment is supposed to be given for correction. What person is corrected if he is dead? If used, it should be defended only as a means of protecting victims and potential victims. (Although it has not been determined that it is a deterrent.)

I wholly agree with Mr. Shelburne that it is a misplaced idea of Christ's love when we coddle the murderer to the detriment of the victim. Somehow the criminal surely needs our love as well, but usually he is immune—that may be why he or she is a criminal. But the victim also needs love, especially the ones left to bear the tragedy of a murder—which should be all of us.

In the Bible, God put aside towns for murderers where they could live as long as they stayed within its walls. There is such a town on the island of Hawaii. The criminals run it, work in it, and live in it, but are restricted to its borders. It works fine; there are no riots or the like. It would seem more sensible to do this than to maintain the present prison institutions, and less costly in money and persons.

I am puzzled why little is said in the Bible about rape. Murderers are only rarely repeaters, while rapers almost invariably are. The one murdered is dead; the one raped has to live with it (as well as the family).

At any rate, I appreciated the article because it has made me think.

Mrs. Robert C. Morrow  
Paducah, Kentucky

## October's Good and Bad

The October issue was proof that *Mission* is one of the few journals around today where a person can read articles from differing viewpoints. Robert Meyers' "That Odd Watcher" was extremely helpful, and then John F. Alexander's "Why We Must Ignore Jesus" was just the opposite. I sat down immediately and wrote an article about common sense and Jesus. The article was a bomb so I just wrote this letter. I understand Alexander, but if everybody lent out their cloak, and coat as well, we could only borrow from the heathens.

Jim Robinson  
St. Louis, Missouri

## Berry and Internalizing

Thanks to Kathy Berry and *Mission* for the very appropriate and valid article, "Why Preachers Should Speak Out Positively on the Role of Women" (November issue). One thought in particular struck me as a major reason for the profusion (and confusion) of emotions on this issue. Kathy states that many ministers have difficulty "internalizing the results of their study and research." Emotional acceptance of intellectual conclusions . . . may require considerable patience and prayer."

The process of internalization is one which begins early in childhood, and, in our culture, internalization of  
(continued on back cover)



THE BABEL-OWNIAN  
CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

# ←CROSS CURRENTS→

All this I saw, or dreamed it in a dream.

At the World's Largest and Most Positive Thinking Soul-Winning Workshop, Billy Don South, in seafoam-green leisure suit, white belt, and white shoes, is going on to a friend about charismatic tendencies in the church. "I tell you, I don't care if that is the way it was in the first century, how are people going to recognize the Lord's church with that going on? They ought to love it or leave it, I say. Why, my own brother-in-law is unfaithful to the church now—oh, no, he still attends on Sunday and all that, but he quit his bus route and never goes on Wednesday nights. Next thing you know he'll forsake the plan of salvation and fellowship the denominations. I tell you we're drifting. It's time for those who love the Lord to stand up and be counted."

Moving right along, I was then in the comfortable den of the \$100,000 home of Walter Frothman. A roaring fire is no warmer than the hearts and minds of the little group gathered to celebrate their recent departure from the mainline church. "Brothers and sisters," says Walter, "God has led us to be a freed-up church, and he is here among us right now." ("Praise his name," whispers Elaine, wearing a \$90 burlap dress and granny glasses; "Thank you, Jesus," murmurs Fred, who has a beard, and faded denims once worn by Willie Nelson.) Walter continues: "I have a burden that we ought to guard against going too far, and letting our new liberty lead to liberalism. Let's just love the Lord, and not get caught up in 'theology' and things we can't have a real peace about. Let's just reach out to those who are really born-again Christians, and walk in that." ("Right on, brother!" says George.)

At the bar during Happy Hour, Libby Lovewell, wearing tight slacks and five-inch heels, sees a friend from church. "Oh, wow, is that you, Howard?" she asks, peering through the smoke. "I don't always run into dudes from church, like *here*, you know. Most of them are

positively *Neanderthal*—they wouldn't dare take a drink, if you can dig that. They're always talking about what we ought to be doing about 'spreading the word and saving the lost,' or something. *Honestly!* I mean, we need to get it all together ourselves before we go out and proselyte, you know? And I think we ought to be into things that meet our needs and make us accepting of each other and help us feel good about ourselves and develop more positive self-concepts, don't you? Honestly, I don't know how much longer I can take it. I am so busy, and we have that lake lot now, you know. And I honestly don't understand all that talk about needing more fellowship (except maybe with guys like *you*, sugar—hey, I *like* your qiana shirt!)) And this emphasis on Sunday and Wednesday nights. Honestly! All this prayin' and preachin' and singin', when we really oughtta be owning responsibility for our own feelings and actions. Well, gotta split now—later, Love."

And then I saw the Son, high and lifted up, and he said to the Father, "How in heaven's name (pardon the expression) have the three of us hung in together so long? If those folks would just get their commands, examples, and necessary inferences together. . . ."

"Actually, praise the Lord," said the Holy Spirit, "we get along because we don't wear clothes, hallelujah."

"And because we're not into regular talk," said the Father. "And it's a good thing because, like man, the In-jargon changes before I can own responsibility for my own speech."

"Nonsense—with all due respect," said the Son. "They don't own anything—even their language—it owns them. They're hung up on their own Tower of Babel."

"Well, at least let's go lead them to have a personal relationship with you," sighed the Father. "I know it's tough on divinity to stay in style; but let's get it on."

—RD



# MISSION

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stereotyped male/female roles has maintained a fairly consistent pattern for years. Initially, it begins by stating from toddlerhood that boys play with trucks and tools, while girls play with dolls and pots and pans.

As children mature, this code of "normal" behavior also takes emotions and intellect into consideration. Generally speaking, girls are emotional—too emotional to make rational and intellectual decisions. So it falls to the boys to be brave (shoulders back and chin up—no tears, please), so that they can shoulder the

weightier matters of life.

If this is what God's creatures have internalized since the cradle, it is no wonder that men and women alike have trouble coming to terms with a wider range of options. Surely we must start somewhere to foster and encourage the dimension and depth God must have purposed in breathing a bit of his own divine spark into his creation.

If the XX and the XY chromosomes are all in place and the hormones functioning properly, perhaps letting Janie play with the trucks and Johnnie with pots and pans will not

cause mass confusion about sex identification.

Martha Haynes  
Dallas, Texas

## Making Me Search

Thank you, brother. Your magazine is "right on"! Not because I agree with everything you publish, but because it causes me to think and search. Too many of our papers have only the spirit of "defense, survival, and moralizing." You "look out," and have a social awareness. Grace! Mercy! Peace!

Roger Rossiter  
Athens, Ohio

## IN MEMORIAM: LARRY CARDWELL

Larry Cardwell, 38, designer of *Mission's* original logo in 1967 and art director for the journal in 1974, was instantly killed December 27 in a car-truck collision at Salisbury Center, New York.

Larry had served as designer and publications art director for Abilene Christian University, where he won numerous national honors for the school. He also designed the major publications used by Churches of Christ in their evangelistic program at the 1964-65 New York's World Fair.

In 1967, Larry moved to New York, where he was employed by several agencies and by New York University. For the past few years he served as supervisor of printing and art director of Pinecrest Bible Training School in Salisbury Center.

Funeral services were conducted January 2 at Gas City, Indiana, Larry's native state. He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Cardwell of Hartford City, Indiana, and a brother, Edward, of Indianapolis.

—Walter Burch, founding member of  
Mission's Board of Trustees